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AN
EXAMINATION
OF
Dr. Rutherford's Argument
AGAINST THE
CONFESSIONAL



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fections, which have any
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AN
E X A M I N A T I O N
O F
Dr. Rutherford's Argument
K. Respecting the Right of
P R O T E S T A N T C H U R C H E S
To require the
C L E R G Y to S U B S C R I B E
TO AN
E S T A B L I S H E D C O N F E S S I O N
O F
F A I T H and D O C T R I N E S.

Wherein is considered, the Tendency and Force
of the Argument.

By a CLERGYMAN of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

HOR.

— Be not ye called R A B B I.

MATT.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. JOHNSON and B. DAVENPORT, in
P A T E R N O S T E R - R O W.
MDCCLXVI.

EXAMINATION

OF

Dr. Rutherford's Argument

Respecting the Rights

PROTESTANT CHURCHES

To receive the

CLERGY as a necessary

TO AN

ESTABLISHED CONFESSION

FAITH and



Wherein is contained a full and true
of the Argument

By a Clergyman of the Church of England.

Quoniam quodlibet in se ipsum est

— In se ipsum est in se ipsum

MATT.

LONDON

Printed for J. Johnson and W. Davison, 17, Pall Mall.

LONDON: 1790.

Price 1s.

TO THE
CLERGY
OF THE
Archdeaonry of ESSEX.

Reverend Brethren,

AS the VINDICATION on which
I have taken the Liberty to
remark, was delivered in Charge to
You; if, on that Account, You
should think I have employed my
Pen rather officiously in this Matter,
You will give me Leave to observe,
that, as your ARCHDEACON hath
thought proper, from the Press, to
offer

D E D I C A T I O N.

offer what was charged upon *You*, as Advice (I may rather call it a *Warning*) to *Us all*, against the dangerous Tendency of the CONFESSIO^NAL; what HE hath said, it is hoped, may be freely examined by any one, without peculiar Offence being taken by *You*. — For the Rest, my Apology is to *You*, in common with the Public.

✱ LET me assure *You*, then, that it is not without Concern I view the Tendency of the Argument I undertake to examine, nor without Reluctance, that, in exposing it, I appear in Opposition to one who so worthily fills

DEDICATION.

fills the arduous and useful Stations in which H E is placed. If the Argument should, however, though framed with the most friendly Intention of defending the Conduct of the reformed Churches in a certain Respect, be found, on Examination, more likely to disserve their Cause in general, and to give an Advantage to their grand Adversary, I shall not be thought an impertinent and forward Disputant, nor to have aimed, either at weakening or discrediting our Church Establishment, by disproving all Authority of its Governours over Ourselves or the Laity, which is not
consistent

DEDICATION.

consistent with the Principles of Protestantism and religious Liberty.

I am, with true Regard,

Your affectionate Brother,

The AUTHOR.

AN
EXAMINATION
OF
Dr. RUTHERFORTH'S
ARGUMENT, &c.

“ **T**O vindicate the general Right which
“ the Governours of our own, or of
“ any other Protestant Church, have
“ to enjoin, that all those, who are admitted
“ to the Office of public Teaching in it,
“ shall subscribe to the Truth of some Con-
“ fession of Faith and Doctrines,” is the
professed Design of the Performance before
me. — It is my Design to enquire,

WHETHER the Reasoning on which
Dr. RUTHERFORTH hath proceeded in
Proof of the Right he hath undertaken to
vindicate, tends; and then consider the Force
of the Argument itself.

B

CONCERN-

CONCERNING the Right of Church-governours in the Case of Subscription, the PROFESSOR hath more cautiously expressed himself in asserting it, than warily proceeded in his Argument to prove it. From the *professed* Design of his Performance we should expect to find the Vindication limited to the Governours of *protestant* Churches, and to some particular Confessions to the Truth of which they might have a Right to enjoin Subscription; but, throughout the Argument, we have no Sight of such Limitation. His Reasoning falls within the following narrow Compass.

“ THE End and Purpose for which
 “ Christianity (or the Church universal) was
 “ instituted, is to lead Men to eternal Life
 “ by the Preservation and Advancement of
 “ true Religion. It is therefore the Duty of
 “ those, who are appointed under CHRIST to
 “ superintend and govern particular Churches,
 “ to secure and promote, as far as they are
 “ able, the true Faith and Doctrines of the
 “ Gospel ——— by the only legitimate
 “ Means,

“ Means, however, viz. Instructions in the
 “ same, backed by Exhortations and Admo-
 “ nitions. Since therefore this is the Duty
 “ of Church-governours, they have a Right
 “ to require, that all those whom they ap-
 “ point to be Pastors and Teachers, should
 “ first subscribe to an established Confession,
 “ that sufficient Assurance may be given of
 “ the Soundness of their Faith and Doctrines.”

This is the Substance (a) of the Argument
 in Vindication of the Right contended for.
 The Remainder of the Performance consists
 chiefly of Strictures on a late remarkable Pub-
 lication (b), the general Attention to which
 gives the Prospect of a brisk Discussion (may
 it be conducted with Temper!) of the
 Rights of the Christian Church, and therein
 of our Church in particular. It is not my
 Intention to concern myself with these Stric-
 tures any farther than occasionally to collect
 from them the DOCTOR'S Sentiments and Prin-

(a) The Reader may see it at full Length in the three
 first Pages of the Vindication.

(b) The Confessional.

principles

ciples of reasoning as illustrating the Nature of his Argument.

THE universal Church of CHRIST, according to our VINDICATOR includes in it “ all
 “ those, who profess to believe in his name,
 “ and have been received by Baptism into
 “ the Number of his Disciples(a).—Particu-
 “ lar Churches are only Parts of the univer-
 “ sal Church(b).” The Church of ROME
 therefore, professing to believe in the Name
 of CHRIST, and its Members being received
 by Baptism into the Number of his Disciples
 is a Part of the Church of CHRIST. Further,
 it is argued, “ that, it being the Duty of
 “ Church-governours [those who are ap-
 “ pointed under CHRIST, to superintend and
 “ govern particular Churches] to take Care,
 “ that the People should be instructed in the
 “ Truth of the Gospel, they have a Right
 “ to require, that all those, whom they
 “ appoint to be Pastors and Teachers,

(a) Vind. p. 1.

(b) Vind. p. 2.

“ should

“ should first give them sufficient Assurance
 “ of the Soundness of their Faith and Doc-
 “ trines — by subscribing to an established
 “ Confession(*a*).” Whatever therefore the
 Right contended for is, or implies in it, it is
 here asserted to belong to the Governours of
 every particular Church, “ that professeth to
 “ believe in the Name of CHRIST, and whose
 “ Members have been received by Baptism
 “ into the Number of his Disciples.” Con-
 sequently, it belongs to the Church of ROME. 
 Merely that it doth so, is not a sufficient
 Reason why a Protestant should refuse to ad-
 mit it, any more than the most allowed
 Claim, which that Church makes in com-
 mon with all protestant Churches. Nor is the
 Remark made with a View to prejudice the
 Reader against the PROFESSOR'S Argument
 on *that* Account; but, however, to prevent
 a Prejudice, it must be owned, which the
 Manner of stating his Design might suggest
 in his Favour, and to my Disadvantage. For
 I would not have it thought, that he has en-

(*a*) Vind. p. 3.

gaged in the Vindication of a Right *peculiar* to our own or protestant Churches, in general, as such, and that I engage in Opposition to so good a Cause.

HAVING shewn that the Argument (admitting its Validity) brought in Proof of the Right which Church-governours have to en-join Subscription to an established Confession, proves this Right not more in Favour of "the Governours of our own or of any other *pro-**testant* Church," than of the Governours, or (if you will) the *Governour* of the *Church of Rome*, let us now enquire into the Nature and Extent of the *Right* itself.—It is a Right which the Church-governour hath "to en-join, that all those, who are admitted to the Office of public Teaching, shall subscribe to the Truth of some Confession of Faith and Doctrines." Now, the Right of enjoining Subscription is not here extended to *all* Confessions of Faith and Doctrines, (*a*) but

(*a*) It is not, however, directly denied by *VINDI-*
CATOR to extend to *all*. And it will appear in the Se-
quel that he must mean it in a pretty extensive Latitude.

only

only to *some*. But, unless the Church-governour hath a Right to enjoin Subscription to *any* Confession whatsoever, there may be *some* Confessions to the Truth of which he hath no Right to enjoin Subscription. And he that can shew, that this Right extends not to *all*, but that it doth to *some*, must be able to point out some one Confession at least, or one *Sort* of Confession, to the Truth of which Church-governours have a Right to enjoin Subscription, and one other, at least, to which this Right doth *not* extend. Otherwise, he cannot prove, that they have any Right at all; since he is ignorant of any one Confession to the Truth of which they can justly claim a Right to enjoin Subscription.

DR. RUTHERFORTH, however, though he hath not directly fixed upon any Confession, as bearing the Marks or certain Criterion of its Fitness to be proposed as a Rule of Teaching, and enjoined by the Governours of the Church to be solemnly subscribed by the Clergy, yet hath given us what he apprehends to be the sole End and Intention of requiring

requiring Subscription. From this we must judge, as well as we can, what Sort of a Right is here contended for, and what may be its *Extent*.

THE sole End, then, for which Church-governours enjoin Subscription to an established Confession is, that the Candidates for holy Orders may “ give them sufficient “ Assurance of the *Soundness* of their Faith “ and Doctrines.” For, “ this, says he, is “ *all* they do, when they require them to “ subscribe to an established Confession (a).” The Confession then proposed must be of such a Nature, that a Subscription to the Truth of it will give the Church-governours *sufficient Assurance* of the *Soundness* of the Subscriber’s Faith and Doctrines. If the Confession to be subscribed doth not give them this *sufficient Assurance*, which is the very Thing and *all* that is required, it can be of no Use or Significance; and the *Right* of

(a) Vind. pag. 3.

enjoining it, being equally insignificant, is altogether unworthy a serious Discussion. X

WHAT Sort of a Confession, therefore, of Faith and Doctrines, upon a solemn Subscription to the same, will give to Church-governours the *Assurance* required? What Articles should it contain? In what Form should it be drawn up? Or, in what Words should the Articles which it contains be conceived? The Governours of every particular Church have a *Right* to be sufficiently assured, that the Ministers which they provide for the People be perfectly *sound* in their Faith and Doctrines. If they have a *Right* to be satisfied in this Matter, we ask, How can they possibly have the Satisfaction they are entituled to by the Means they insist upon? What will content them? What will content them all? For they have all an equal Right to be satisfied; the Governors of one Part of the universal Church not more than those of any other Part. Yes, they have *all* of them the Right, and (as the Argument goes) they *ought* all to insist upon this

C

sufficient

sufficient Assurance being given to them ; otherwise, they neglect their Duty to the People, who are to receive from *them* their Instructors. For the Right is inferred from their Duty to take Care, that the People shall have sound Doctrine preached unto them. “ May they not be contented with a
 “ solemn Declaration, or Subscription (the
 “ Distinction not being worth an honest
 “ Man’s (*a*) regarding) on the Part of
 “ Teachers and Pastors, that they receive the
 “ Scriptures as the Word of GOD, and will
 “ instruct the People out of them (*b*) ? ”
 This is deemed by the PROFESSOR very insufficient to satisfy Church-governours in our Days, which was so “ unlikely to satisfy
 “ TIMOTHY or TITUS, that they who
 “ made it (*c*) ” were found in the Faith. The Increase of Church Emoluments since the Time of these primitive Church-governours, is made an Objection to such easy

(*a*) Vind. p. 7. Line 4, from the Bottom.

(*b*) Ibid. See also CONFESSIO^NAL, p. 16.

(*c*) Pag. 8. Lin. 2.

Terms of Admission to preach the Gospel. For, "to say the Truth (argues the PROFESSOR) the more *beneficial* the Office of public Teaching in the Church is made, the greater Occasion there will be to guard against false Teachers by requiring Subscriptions of those who are admitted to it (a)." So that this is far too *general* a Mode of Confession, and, being insufficient to give Assurance of sound Faith and Doctrines, is not only short of what Church-governours have a *Right* to demand, but of what it is their *Duty*, as Proveditors of sound Doctrine for the People, to require and insist upon. ✕

SHALL we come up to the *Extent* of this Right, then, by allowing, that Church-governours may extract from the Scriptures a Set of Articles to be subscribed, the most particularly expressive of their own Sentiments that they can possibly pitch upon, and of the Faith and Doctrines, which they

(a) Vind. p. 4.

would

would have the People instructed in, conceived, however, in no other Words "than
 " the Words of CHRIST and his Apostles?" *
 It seems not. "For (the PROFESSOR asks)
 " if the Sense of Scripture may be expressed
 " more *plainly*, why not not more *precisely*,
 " than in the Words of CHRIST and his
 " Apostles (a)?" Nay, he observes, "that
 " nothing is more common, than to extract
 " very unscriptural Doctrines from Scripture-
 " language. The Governours of the Church
 " have, therefore, found it *necessary* to in-
 " troduce what are called new and *unscrip-*
 " *tural* Words and Expressions, not to fix
 " the Sense of Scripture-doctrines, but to
 " fix the Sense, in which Scripture-expres-
 " sions are understood by those, who are
 " Candidates for the Office of public Teach-
 " ing, and whose Faith and Doctrines they
 " have, therefore, a Right to examine into
 " and ascertain (b)." It should seem, then,
 * that an established Confession of Faith and

(a) Vind. pag. 11. lin. 1.

(b) Ibid. lin. 17.

Doctrines may not only *expediently* and lawfully enough be conceived in other Words than those of Scripture, but that it absolutely *ought* to be conceived in other Words; "those, that" are called *new* and *unscriptural* Words and "Expressions," having been found not only most *proper* but even *necessary* to answer the Purpose of Church-governours in the Case of Subscription.

* SINCE, therefore, neither a solemn Confession, in general, that the Scriptures are the Word of GOD, together with as solemn a Promise that the People shall be instructed out of them; nor a Confession drawn up in the Words of CHRIST and his Apostles, though it should consist of Articles studiously selected out of Scripture as most expressive of that Faith and those Doctrines which the Governours of the Church judge to be sound, is calculated to give *sufficient* Assurance of the Subscriber's Sentiments; we need go no farther in asking, what *Sort* of a Confession will satisfy Church-governours in this Matter. For, it follows that

that it must be such an one as the Church-governours shall please to enjoin. And, since it is not fit and proper, that the Articles of which it consists should be expressed in *Scripture*-terms, in the Words of CHRIST and his Apostles, it may happen, especially, if it consist of many Articles, that some of them will be thought very *unscriptural*. But, no Matter for that; it is enough, that they are *scriptural* in the *Opinion* of the Prescribers and Enjoiners. They are here made the only Judges of Orthodoxy, Judges of it, not for themselves only, but for the People also. The People *must* receive their Teachers at *their* Hands, and (so far doth the exclusive Right of these Church-governours reach) *must* hear the Word of GOD no otherwise interpreted than strictly and most rigorously in Conformity to *their* Notions. For they have a Right to prescribe a Confession that will give them *sufficient* Assurance that no Scripture-doctrines shall be taught whose Sense is not fixed as they think it ought to be. To receive this Assurance they have also a Right to draw up the Confession in what Terms they please

please, to reject Scripture-terms and Expressions, where they admit of any Latitude of Interpretation, and to introduce such Terms as will most precisely convey the Sense in which they enjoin them to be subscribed. However, let us take Care we misrepresent not the Doctor's Meaning on this Head;

FOR, it is observed by him, that Church-governours have introduced these new and unscriptural Words and Expressions “*not*” “to fix the Sense of Scripture-*doctrines*,” “but to fix the Sense in which Scripture-*expressions* are understood” by the Candidates. How doth the learned PROFESSOR mean to distinguish here?—What Difference appears in the Distinction? Or in what Way doth he mean it should affect the Argument? Would he shew us that there is a material Difference between “fixing the Sense of Scripture-*doctrines*,” and “fixing the Sense of Scripture-*expressions*,” containing those Doctrines? The Difference is not perceivable; any *material* Difference, at least. For, if the Sense of a Scripture-*expression* be fixed, the Sense

Sense of the *doctrine* contained in that Expression is fixed too; unless it can be supposed that the Doctrine, being mysterious in its own Nature, may remain in Sense and Meaning unfixed (in which Case it can be no Object of Faith) after the Sense of the Scripture-expression is ascertained and fixed. But this I persuade myself cannot be supposed by the PROFESSOR.

Do TH the Force of this Distinction; then, lie in the *Difference* of the *Persons*, whom the Fixing the Sense of Scripture-expressions is to affect? As if it had been said: By introducing these new and unscriptural Expressions into their established Confession, Church-governours pretend not to fix the Sense of Scripture-*doctrines*, that is, to put up their Opinions and Sense of them, as the Standard of Orthodoxy for *all others*, or even for the *Church* over which they preside, but only to fix the Sense in which Scripture expressions are understood by the *Candidates* for holy Orders, and this *only* to the End that they may know *their* Faith and Doctrines, without lording

lording it in any Manner over their Faith or the Faith of the People. If this is intended by the Distinction, let us see what it amounts to; and, whether the Principle on which it is founded will justify this Claim of Church-power, whatever be the Intention of them that claim it.

A CONFESSION, then, is framed, consisting of Articles of Faith and Doctrines, to the Truth of which *all* those that desire to be Instructors of the People are enjoined to subscribe. If these Articles were expressed "in the Words of CHRIST and his Apostles," there could be no Doubt of their being scriptural. But, being in this Form capable of various Interpretations, Church-governours have thought it proper and necessary to introduce in their Room new and unscriptural Expressions into their Confessions. This is done in Order to fix the Sense in which the Subscribers understand Scripture-expressions. By the by, it is not easy to conceive how *unscriptural* Words and Expressions can so

D

pressions

pressions. Such, however, is the Reason assigned for preferring this Mode of Confession. But, what *End* is proposed by Church-governours in thus “fixing the Sense in which
 “Scripture-expressions are understood by
 “those who are Candidates for the Office of
 “pub’ic Teaching?”—Why, not to compel any one to subscribe against his Judgement, but only that they may know and ascertain the Faith and Doctrines of the Candidates. And where, it may be demanded, is the Hardship of this, either upon the Candidates or People?—Why object to the Claim of a Right apparently so harmless in itself, if not beneficial in its Consequences?—Or, how can the Exercise of it possib’y affect the tenderest and most scrupulous Conscience?—The Candidates are not “*compelled* to assent to
 “the Propositions contained in the established
 “Confession.” The Confession thus modelled to the Mind of the Church-governours,
 “is not used by the Church as a *Law* to
 “compel them to assent, but only as a *Test*
 “to discover, whether they do assent or
 “not.”

“not(*a*).”—Very true. The Confession enjoined to be subscribed, is not of the Nature of a *Law* compelling Assent or Subscription. And therefore it needed not have been observed, that “no Church hath a *Right* to use it as such; for it *cannot* be used as such. It is *only* used, and *can* only be used as a *Test*, and hard enough, perhaps, it will appear in the Sequel, that *such* a Confession *should* be used as a *Test* to discover whether they do assent or not.

FOR I must now ask, what is intended by the Discovery?—Is any thing consequential upon it either to the Candidate or People?—Doth the Purpose of the Discovery terminate *solely* in the Satisfaction given to the Governour of the Church?—The Confession, it is said, is used *only* as a *Test* to discover whether the Candidates do assent or not. But what Use is made of the *Test* itself?—When the Church-governour hath made the Discovery he wanted, doth the Right contended for extend no

(*a*) Vind. p. 3. l. 18.

farther?



farther?—Is the Discovery to serve him merely as a Matter of Curiosity?—Has he a Right only to satisfy his own Inquisitiveness, and, having done that, is his acting any farther in consequence of the Discovery unwarrantable?—If this be *all*, the Authority he claims appears harmless enough, but useless altogether, and the Exertion of it somewhat impertinent.

BUT, this is far from being *all*, that is meant by this rigid *Test*. The ultimate End proposed by enjoining Subscription to the Truth of an established Confession, is owned to be, with Respect to the Candidates, “to admit to the Office of publicly teaching “the Gospel those *only* that are *sound* in their “Faith and Doctrines,” and, of consequence, to exclude from that Office, *all* those that are *unsound*. And, that this End may be most effectually answered, the Confession to be subscribed is drawn up in such strict Terms, as will leave as little Doubt as possible in the Minds of Church-governours, in what Sense the Candidates understand those

Scripture

Scripture-expressions, in the Room of which the new and unscriptural ones in the Confession are introduced. If, by subscribing, or by a solemn Declaration, they give the Governours of the Church Assurance, that they assent to the Articles of the Confession, they are deemed *sound* in the Faith: If, on the other Hand, they refuse to give this Assurance, they are deemed *heterodox* or *unsound*. The established Confession, therefore, is used as a *Test* of the Soundness or Unsoundness of the Candidates for holy Orders, in their Faith and Doctrines, and “these *new* and *unscriptural* Words and Expressions are introduced” to make it the more effectually answer *this* End. So that the Distinction aimed at by way of Apology for them, viz. “that they “are not introduced to fix the Sense of Scripture-doctrines, but to fix the Sense in “which Scripture-expressions are understood “by the Candidates,” amounts to nothing that will affect the Argument in its Tendency. Church-governours are asserted to have a Right to enjoin *any* Confession of Faith and Doctrines to be subscribed, that shall be scriptural

* total in *their Opinion*. Subscription to an
 established Confession, containing *their Opinions*, is the Assurance which the Clergy
 are required to give, that they are *sound* in
 their Faith ; and, according to the Sense there
 fixed, and no other, of Scripture doctrines or
 Scripture-expressions, they are to teach the
 People, or be excluded this Office, how
 strong a Proof soever they may have given of
 their Abilities to teach the Gospel, and what-
 ever Assurance they are ready to give,
 that they *will* do it to the utmost of their
 Abilities, and according to the best of *their*
 Judgement. An alternative attended with
 no great Hardship, it may be thought, on
 * the honest Candidate ! As it doth not im-
 ply the unhappy Dilemma of "*subscribe*
 "*or starve*." Starving would be a terri-
 ble Thing, indeed ! And, therefore, the
 learned VINDICATOR hath thought it
 worth his while to refute so heavy a Charge
 against the Church, and to state the Dilem-
 ma properly. " The Dilemma itself, he
 " observes, is not, *subscribe or starve* ; but,
 " either you must, by *subscribing* to the esta-
 " blished

“blished Confession of the Church, in which
“you desire to be a Teacher of the Gospel;
“give it the Evidence which it requires, that
“your Faith and Doctrines are such, as it
— “judges to be agreeable to the true Religion of
“CHRIST, or else you must apply yourself
“to some other Way of getting a Livelie-
“hood (a).” *Some other Way of getting a*
* *Livelihood, Mr. PROFESSOR! Some other*
Way! Than what? Than this Way of
subscribing? Is Subscription to be men-
tioned among the Ways of getting a Live-
lihood? I am, then, no longer ignorant of
some Part of “the general Benefit proposed
“by Subscriptions (b).”

BUT, to pass by the Hardship, great or
small, of excluding the conscientious non-sub-
scribing Candidate from this way of getting
his Livelihood, I beg Leave to turn the PRO-
FESSOR'S Attention from the Candidate,

(a) Vind. p. 5. lin. 17.

(b) Ib. p. 6. lin. 3.

upon whose Loss or Advantage it seems wholly fixed, to the Dilemma in Respect of the People.

CHURCH-GOVERNOURS are to provide Teachers for the People. The Teachers must *all* have subscribed to the established Confession, and are thereby bound on their Part to teach no other Doctrines than *those*, or such as are agreeable to those, that are contained in it. What becomes of the *People*, then, in Case of a conscientious Dissent from this arbitrary Confession on *their* Part?—Are they obliged to be *thus* provided, or not provided at all? — Yes; the Dilemma on their Part is, You must either take for your Instructors those whom we think sound; or, want Gospel-instruction. Either those that are desirous of instructing you must *subscribe*, or you must *starve*, for want of Instruction. Will this Sort of *starving* be thought a less Hardship upon the People, than the other upon the Candidate?—Or, will it be said, there is no Fear of a Dearth of this Sort of Provision?—

That Church-governours will always be able

to provide them with subscribing, and, consequently, *sound* Ministers? But, the Misfortune is, the People happen to differ widely in Opinion from their Governours. They cannot, in Conscience, receive the Doctrines taught by the Ministers appointed them, if they explain Scripture invariably, according to the Confession subscribed. For they do not believe the Articles set forth in it. What is to be done then?—They may seek other Instruction, if they like not that which is appointed. May they so?—But where will they find it?—If Church-governours have a Right to require that *all* those that are desirous of preaching the Gospel to the People, shall *first* subscribe their established Confession, who, that have not *first* subscribed, have a Right to instruct them?—But, if they *may* seek other Instruction than that which is provided for them, they *ought* not. For the PROFESSOR ventures to assert, that “the Governours of the Church, *though* they “do not bind the Laity to subscribe to the “established Confession, yet understand them “to be *bound* in Conscience, as much as the

E

“ Clergy,

“ Clergy, to believe and practice what is
 “ contained in it.”——“ In this Rule [the
 “ established Confession] they propose to all
 “ who are Members of the Church, where-
 “ in they preside, to the *Laitie* as well as to
 “ the *Clergy*, such a Summary of the Reli-
 “ gion of CHRIST as *every* Christian, ac-
 “ cording to the best of their Judgement, is
 “ bound in Conscience to assent to(a).” This
 sure is keeping all tight enough in the
 Church! In the Judgement of these Church-
 governours, no Christian can refuse his As-
 sent to the established Confession, drawn up
 in terms *new* and *unscriptural*, without
 wounding his Conscience. Severe Judge-
 ment!—But hear their Apologist. “ When
 “ they have done this, they leave every Man
 “ to judge and determine for himself, whe-
 “ ther it is such an one as he *ought* to assent
 “ to or not(a).” Inconsistently said!—Is every
 Man left to judge and determine for himself
 concerning the Truth or Falshood of the

(a) Vind. p. 14.

(b) Vind. p. 14, l. 8. from the Bottom.

Confession,

Confession, its Agreeableness or Contrariety to the Word of God, and whether he ought to assent to it or not, when the Church-governours take upon themselves to judge both for the Laity and Clergy, to judge what Sort of a Confession they shall set forth to them for their Faith and Practice, yea, and to judge their very Consciences, as they may assent to or dissent from it?—For they judge that the Laity are *bound in Conscience* to believe and practise what is contained therein. They propose such a Summary of Religion, as, according to the best of their Judgment (and, at best, their Judgement is fallible) every Christian is *bound in Conscience* to assent to.

It is now Time to ask ;—What doth the Church of Rome more than this? What Tyranny doth she exercise over the Consciences of Men which exceeds this? Or, what Fetters hath she yet forged for their Understandings, which the Governours of every other Christian Church, by the above Reasoning, have not a full Right to put on the Understandings

of those over whom they preside?—Doth the
Church of Rome set forth the damnable Doctrines of *Transubstantiation*, *Purgatory*, *Praying to Saints*, with a monstrous Heap of other Absurdities, Contradictions and Superstitions, to be taught by the Clergy, and to be believed and practised by the People?—She hath good Right to enjoin them all, in an *established* Confession of Faith and Doctrines, to be subscribed by all those that are desirous of preaching the Gospel, and to be a Rule of Faith and Practice to the Laity. It matters not that they are called *damnable* Doctrines, by those that are without the Pale of that Church; or, that they be thought so by Numbers of the Laity *professedly* of that Church; or, indeed, that they are *damnable* in themselves, polluting the Fountain of Life, making the Word of GOD serve a Lye and Delusion, and turning the Grace of the Gospel into the hardest Bondage,—so long as the *Pope*, the *Church-governour*, judges them to be scriptural and saving Doctrines! And let me ask; What would it avail towards an

Apology

Apology for erecting such a spiritual Domini-
 tion in the Christian World, should that
 powerful Prince of Darkness, or any of his
 ministering Angels for him, say, "When we
 " have done *this*; when we have set forth
 " an established Confession of Faith and
 " Doctrines, as the *only* Rule for our Clergy,
 " to teach and interpret the Scriptures, by,
 " and containing such a Summary of the
 " Religion of CHRIST, as *every* Christian,
 " according to the best of *our* Judgement, is
 " bound in Conscience to assent to; when
 " we have done this, we leave every Man to
 " judge and determine for himself, whether
 " the Confession is such an one as he *ought*
 " to assent to or not." Should we not reject the
 Apology with Indignation or with Con-
 tempt? With Indignation; if we considered it
 (as well we might) as a farther Affront offer-
 ed to our Understandings in thus attempting
 / justify all his Impositions; With Contempt; if
 we could believe that he sincerely endeavour-
 ed, by such Meekness of Language, to bring
 us to a dutiful Submission to him, and hoped
 to reconcile us to his just and lawful Autho-
 rity

rity. Would his alledging his Duty, as the Governour of the Church, to provide the People with *sound* Teachers, and preserve them from false Faith and Doctrines, be admitted as any just Plea for the Right of establishing whatever Confession he thought proper?—Or, should we think he claimed no *unreasonable* Power over the Souls of Men, on telling, and even convincing us, that the Articles contained in the established Confession, were, in his *Opinion*, and according to the *best of his Judgment*, such as every Christian is *bound in Conscience* to assent to?—No. By evincing his Sincerity he would but convince us of the Weakness of his Judgement, not the Reasonableness of his Injunctions, or the Moderation of his Claim.

THE Right, therefore, of Church-governours over both Clergy and Laity, which the PROFESSOR would vindicate, is very impertinently argued from, and the Extent of it unduely measured by the upright Intentions of those who claim it, and the Use of their best Judgement in the Exercise of the
Power

Power it gives them. With Gratitude I reflect upon and confide in the just Intentions, and acknowledge the Lenity and Moderation with which Church-power is exercised under the SUPREME HEAD OF OUR CHURCH. Yet, I am not bound to admit it as an Argument for the Reasonableness of the *Claim* itself to Power, as it subsists even in *our* Establishment, the most moderate, I believe, of all others. The Power *actually* exercised by Church-governours, limits not the Degree of Power to which they may *claim* a Right. Nor want I to shew, that Dr. RUTHERFORTH means to plead for the *Exertion* of a greater Degree of Power than is exerted by the Governours of our Church, at present; or, even for so much Power as some of them may, now and then, *take upon themselves* to exercise over the inferior Clergy; but, that he has proved, if his Argument is solid, the general *Right* of Church-governours to much greater. For, I think, it must, by this Time, have appeared, that the *Right* which he contends for (though he calls it "the general
" Right which the Governours of our own,
" or

" or of any other *protestant* Church, have to
 " enjoin, that all those, who are admitted to
 " the Office of public Teaching in it, shall
 " subscribe to the Truth of *some* Confession
 " of Faith and Doctrines") is *unlimited* in
 its Extent; and, that the Principles on
 which he hath reasoned, justify the Claim of
 the Church of *Rome*, in every Thing that
 she requires of her Clergy; and, that the
 Ministers and Pastors of every other Church,
 exercise that Office *unwarrantably*; or else,
 that this general *Right* contended for is alto-
 gether insignificant, without Meaning and
 Effect.

I SHALL now consider the *Force* of the
 Argument, by which the PROFESSOR
 would vindicate the Claim of this Right over
 the Clergy.

" The End and Purpose for which *Chris-*
 " *tianity*, or (in the Words of the VINDI-
 " CATOR) the *universal Church* of
 " CHRIST was instituted, is to lead Men
 " to eternal Life by the Preservation and
 Advancement

“Advancement of true Religion (a).”
 This is the *first* Proposition in the Argument,
 and it is readily admitted. The next is a
 Deduction from the foregoing, viz. “It is,
 “therefore, the Duty of Church-governours
 “[those who are appointed, under CHRIST,
 “to superintend and govern particular
 “Churches] to secure and promote, as far
 “as they are able, the true Faith and Doc-
 “trines of the Gospel (b).” This is as read-
 dily granted as the other; granted, however,
 not as a just Deduction of a Duty *peculiar* to
 Church-governours, but of a Duty incum-
 bent on every Christian Man, on all the
 Members of every particular Church, what-
 ever Office they may, or may not, bear in
 the same.

I AM the more disposed to concede to this
 Inference, from the Manner in which the
 VINDICATOR hath explained himself on
 a very important Circumstance in it. “The

(a) Vind. p. 1. towards the Bottom.

(b) Vind. p. 2. l. 3.

“ only legitimate Means, he observes, of
 “ advancing and preserving the true Religion
 “ of CHRIST, are Instructions in the Faith
 “ and Doctrines which he, and his Apostles
 “ in his Name, delivered to Mankind, with
 “ Exhortations and Admonitions, to attend
 “ to them, to embrace them, to persevere
 “ in them, and, by a pious and virtuous
 “ Life and Conversation, to bring forth the
 “ proper Fruits of them^(a).”—Undoubtedly,
 these are very *proper* and *legitimate* Means of
 advancing and preserving true Religion; and,
 though I think not the *only* ones, as (to men-
 tion no more) a personal Example of the
 Christian Graces might have been added, yet
 I have no Objection to Church-governours
 exercising the Office of thus *instructing, ex-*
horting and *admonishing*.

FROM this Duty, which, it is granted, is
 incumbent on Church-governours, in *common*
 with all other Christians, the Doctor would
 next infer their *Right* over the Clergy and
 Laity in the Case of Subscription. “ Since
 “ therefore it is the Duty of Church-gover-

(a) Vind. p. 3.

"nours to take Care, that the People should
 "be instructed in the Gospel—" Hold, Sir!
 this has not yet been granted. It is the Duty
 of Church-governours, as it is of *all* Christian
 Men, to advance and preserve the true Re-
 ligion of CHRIST. This was rightly de-
 duced from the very End of Christianity;
 and a proper Means of discharging their Duty
 was pointed out, viz. *Instruction, Exhorta-*
tion and Admonition. But that "it is the
 "Duty of Church-governours to take Care,
 "that the People should be instructed in the
 "Gospel," is an Assertion so mewhat, in-
 deed not a little, different in its Implication.
 The former implys, that Church-governours
 should, according to their Abilities and Op-
 portunities, *instruct, exhort and admonish* the
 Members of their particular Church, and, if
 these are the *only* legitimate Means, should
 use no *other* Means of advancing and pre-
 serving the true Religion; that, in superin-
 tending and governing the Church (so far as
 the Advancement and Preservation of Religi-
 on is concerned) they should interfere no far-
 ther than this, viz. to *instruct, exhort and ad-*
monish

monish, no more than any other Members of the Church, whose Duty also it is to do the same, as far as their Abilities and Opportunities extend. But the latter implies, that they may and ought to interfere *further* than this; even to take Care, that the People receive their Teachers and Instructors in the Gospel at their Appointment. Whether I can admit this as true in itself or not, it is not to my Purpose to declare. I by no means admit it as a just *Inference* from the FIRST Position, respecting the End and Purpose for which Christianity was instituted.

LET us view it in the Form of a Syllogism, that clear and steady Medium, which, in the *University*, never fails to give the true Sight of the Question. Why should it fail of the same Effect on the public Eye?

THE End and Purpose for which this Society (the universal Church) was instituted by CHRIST, the Head, is to lead Men to eternal Life by the Preservation and Advancement of true Religion.

BUT

BUT, *it is the Duty of this Society by the only legitimate Means, of Instruction, Exhortation, and Admonition, to answer the End and Purpose for which it was instituted by CHRIST their Head.*

THEREFORE, *it is the Duty of Church-governours to appoint Pastors and Teachers for the People.*

Is this a just Conclusion?—Far from it. We are not lead by these Steps to understand the Duty of Church-governours as such; an Office not mentioned in the Premises of the Syllogism. The only just and immediate Inference is,

THEREFORE, *it is the Duty of this Society [of all the Members thereof, of Church-governours not more than of others] by the above-mentioned Means only, to preserve and advance the true Religion which leads to eternal Life.*

THE Duty, indeed, is predicated universally of the Society, and therefore must be extended to Church-governours, who are
Members

* Members thereof, but not *exclusively* of the
 People. The same Duty, and no other, is
 predicated of them, that is predicated of the
 People. And what is that?—Why, not
 “ to take Care that the People shall be in-
 “ structed in the Gospel,” or in other Words
 “ to appoint Pastors and Teachers^(a),” but
 to instruct in the Truth of the Gospel, to
 exhort and admonish every Man his Neigh-
 bour to the utmost of his Abilities; if these
 be the only legitimate Means of advancing
 and preserving Religion. This *only* is the
 Duty of Church-governours, considered as
 Members of this Society, and as such *only* they
 should be considered in the *Conclusion*, having
 appeared in no other Light in the *Premises* of
 the Syllogism.

HERE, therefore, we might stop, and leave
 the PROFESSOR to prove this Position,
 which is by no means rightly inferred, viz.
 “ that it is the Duty of Church-governours
 “ to take Care that the People should be in-

(a) Vind. p. 3.

“ instructed

“Instructed in the Truth of the Gospel,” before we proceed any farther in the Examination of his Argument. Because, whatever he would infer from a Proposition, which itself is unproved, cannot be admitted for Truth. However, while we are about it, let us see what might be made of this Position, allowing it in Favour of the Argument.

THE learned VINDICATOR would thus avail himself of it: “Since therefore it is the Duty of Church-governours to take
“Care, that the People should be instructed
“in the Truth of the Gospel; they have a
“Right to require, that all those, whom
“they appoint to be Pastors and Teachers,
“should first give them *sufficient* Assurance
“of the Soundness of their Faith and Doctrines.” Here be it observed, that when the VINDICATOR says, “that it is the Duty of Church-governours to take Care that
“the People should be instructed,” he means, that it is their Duty “to appoint Pastors
“and

* “*and Teachers for them(a).*” On this their supposed Duty, he grounds their *Right* to require of the Candidates for Orders, *sufficient* Assurance of the Soundness of their Faith and Doctrines.

Now, not to mention, at present, the Vagueness of the *Term* by which we are to measure the Nature and Extent of that Assurance to which they are said to be entitled, how does it appear as yet, that Church-governours have a Right to require *any* Assurance of the *Soundness* of those whom they appoint in Faith and Doctrines?—Church-governours have a Right to require every Thing of the Candidates that will enable them to do their Duty. But, if the Assurance required be not necessary to this End, nor can enable them better and more certainly, than some *other* Method might, to provide Ministers for the People, it doth not appear that they

(a) I have not therefore misrepresented the Doctor's Argument, by substituting, to illustrate his Meaning, the one Expression for the other.

have

have a Right to demand it. Now, the Assurance required, though it is called an Assurance of Soundness in *Faith and Doctrines*, is nothing more, in the *VINDICATOR'S* Account, than an Assurance of the Soundness of the Candidates in *that* Faith and *those* Doctrines, which Church-governours have set forth in the established *Confession*. But, the Church-governours themselves may be grossly mistaken and *unsound* in their Faith and Doctrines; and many of the Articles enjoined to be subscribed may be contrary to the Word of *GOD*. In that Case, instead of having done their Duty, which was "to take Care, "that the People should be instructed in the "Truth of the Gospel," they have, by appointing *unsound* Pastors and Teachers, "taken Care, that the People should be instructed" in Faith and Doctrines, that are *contrary* to the Truth of the Gospel.

WILL it be said, that they have done their Duty, because they have acted according to the best of their Judgement?—By no Means should it be so said in this Case. They should

have acted according to some more *certain* Rule, in determining on the *Soundness* of Candidates, than their *own Judgement*. It lies on the VINDICATOR to shew, that, allowing it to be the Duty of Church-governours to provide the People with *sound* Pastors, the Method they take for this Purpose in requiring Subscription, is the most effectual Method of informing their Judgement, and leading them to the best and safest Choice of Ministers, before we can allow that they have done their Duty by acting according to their *own Judgement* in this Matter. As that has not been shewn, it doth not appear yet, that they have a Right to determine upon the Soundness of the Faith of Pastors for the People by their own Judgement. In short, it doth not appear from the Argument, but that, if any Assurance be necessary to be given by those that are willing to teach the Gospel, of their *Soundness* in Faith and Doctrines, it should be given to the *People* themselves. They, for any Thing the PROFESSOR hath urged to the contrary, may be the properest Judges for themselves in this Affair, and

and what Sort of Ministers, in respect of *Orthodoxy*, should be appointed them. *Others* may be fitter Judges of their *Learning* and other Qualifications for the Office of public Teaching, but, of their *Soundness* in the Christian Faith, the *People*, for any Thing, I say, yet urged in the Vindication to the contrary, may have the justest Claim to all the Satisfaction that is proper to be given.

BUT, supposing the Church-governours, and not the People, have a Right to demand *some* Assurance of the Candidates, that they are *sound* in the Faith, let us see *what* Assurance of this they are entitled by their Office to require. The PROFESSOR says, they have a Right to require *sufficient* Assurance. Very fair for both Sides, this, the Governour and the Candidate!—What church-governour can desire to have more Assurance given him than is *sufficient*?—And what Candidate can reasonably refuse to give only so much as is *sufficient*?—So obviously equitable the VINDICATOR seems to think this must appear to every Man, that he thus caps the finishing

finishing of his Argument in Favour of Church-governours; " This is *all* that they " do, when they require them to subscribe " to an established Confession." And indeed, Sir! it is far too much, as the *Sufficiency* has been defined, for any Christian to require, and for any Christian to submit to. For, it hath already been shewn, that nothing can give that *sufficient* Assurance to Church-governours, which the PROFESSOR vindicates their Right to receive of the Candidates, short of a Subscription to an established Confession, that shall contain *such* Articles of Faith and Doctrines as they *please*, scriptural or unscriptural, provided they be scriptural in *their* Judgement.

Though we should admit, therefore, every other Part of the Argument, yet we must stop here. We can go no farther on the Way with the DOCTOR, without facing down Reason, and common Sense itself. " It is " the Duty of Church-governours to take " Care, that the People should be instructed in the Truth of the Gospel;

" Therefore,

" They

“ *They have a Right to enjoin Subscrip-
 “ tion to A N*” (I may take that Liberty with
 this little Word to fix the Sense in which
 we are to understand it, which the Doc-
 TOR allows Church-governours to take
 with Scripture itself, and put it) “ *ANY*
 “ *establisht Confession they think proper.*” I
 need not add more to expose the Enor^uinity
 of this Conclusion, unless it be to shew
 further, that the very opposite Conclusion
 may be drawn with equal, if not more logi-
 cal Exactness, from this supposed Duty of
 Church-governours. For, if it be “ the Duty
 “ of Church-governours to take Care that
 “ the People should be instructed in the
 “ Truth of the Gospel,” *they have a Right,*
 (rather it becomes their Duty) to enjoin, that
 all those, whom they admit to the Office of pub-
 lic Teaching, shall first give them sufficient Assu-
 rance, that they will not teach and explain the
 Scriptures, according to any System of Faith
 and Doctrines, drawn up by fallible Men; in
 other Words, that they will not subscribe to
 an *establisht Confession of Faith and Doctrines.*
 I say not, that this is a true Proposition or
 justly inferred; but this I will maintain, that
 it

it is a more just Inference from the supposed Duty of Church-governours, than, that they have a Right to require Subscription to *such* an established Confession as the VINDICATOR must mean, if their be any Meaning at all in the Right contended for.

FROM this View of the Argument, as to its Tendency more especially, it appears, how little Reason we have to applaud that Zeal for ecclesiastical Establishments, which may carry the Man whose Heart is possessed of it, beyond those Bounds of Discretion, he meant not to transgress, and within which Bounds alone any real and essential Service to our Establishment in particular can be done. Scornfully as the Projectors for its farther Reformation (which certainly must be wished for by every true Member of it) have been hitherto treated by some as mere *Visionaries*, by others as *dangerous Innovators*, sure I am, that to oppose them on Principles favourable to *all* Establishments, to the worst and most intolerant, no less than to the best and most rational, tends more

more to disgrace the Constitution of our Church in the Eyes of all sensible and considerate Persons, than even the most injudicious Attempts that have been made to remove its acknowledged Imperfections. It should make the Zealot for Church-authority something cooler, and less strenuous in his Endeavour to keep it to its *full Stretch*, to consider, that he is thus most effectually weakening it, and opening a Way for those very *Innovations* which he so much dreads, and absurdly thinks to keep out by opposing to them an *unwarrantable* Authority. In a Land of civil Liberty, this Method of vindicating the Right and defending the Conduct of Church-governours, will prove worse than ineffectual for the Purpose. It will inspire into the Minds of one Part of the Clergy (if the *Laitie* should think themselves totally uninterested in the Subject) a restless Jealousy of a Power over them, unsuspected before, through the gentle Exertion of it under a mild government.

AFTER

AFTER all, I would not have the learned Man, whose Argument I have freely examined, think that he is represented as being of an intolerant and persecuting Spirit. I mean not to do it. I have not done it. I think him not such. Nor should I think myself justified (though by high Example *(a)* authorized) in casting any invidious Reflection, for the Principles avowed in his Book, on *the Atmosphere in which THIS learned Professor hath been brought up*, and still breathes. The Principles on which he hath *reasoned*, are very different from those on which, I believe, he would *act* in a higher, and on which he appears to act in his present Sphere of ecclesiastical Authority. *These* are every Day bringing Honour to the *Man*, in their apparent Influence on his Conduct, while *those*, mistaken for Principles of a better Kind than they really are, appear to the Discredit of the *Writer*. For, I appeal to every one that is acquainted with

(a) Bishop of Gloucester.

the Subject, and shall have carefully examined the *Vindication*, whether it is not founded on those very Principles, which the honest, though mistaken, Dissenter, is every Day representing as the *Reproach* of the Church of *England*, which the artful Papist affects to compliment Her for retaining, but which a true Church of *England* Man will ever indignantly disavow.

The E N D.

In second Edition

Erratum

Page 47. L. 14. read Method

D. Robertson's Argument, &c.

the Bible, and still have carefully examined
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THE B. M. O.